

AMATEUR CINE

W O R L D

DEC., 1944—FEB., 1945

FILMING INVISIBILITY

By ANDREW BUCHANAN

. . .

THE CHRISTMAS SHOW

By TERENCE V. STRONG

. . .

THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

(FAMOUS LIBRARY FILMS)

By H. A. V. BULLEID, M.A.

. . .

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GORDON S. MALTHOUSE, Editor

Library Films & the 'Conversionist'

IT is a little difficult for the film maker immersed in his hobby to realise that there have always been more people whose interest in amateur cinematography goes only as far as showing films than those who make them for themselves. One may liken them to gramophiles who collect records and take great joy in listening to music, but do not make it themselves. During the war, of course, the amateur cine movement has been kept alive almost exclusively by projection.

The fact that there is a keener interest in it than in camera-work, coupled with the experience gained in production and use during the war, suggests that the biggest improvements in post-war apparatus may be looked for more in projectors than in cameras. We may reasonably expect better projectors but we must also remember that until the home cinema begins to approach the popularity of the radiogram, the best is unlikely to be within the reach of all.

The amateur who cannot be lavish in his purchases will need the assurance that the next best will satisfy all but the most critical eye and ear. And an essential condition of this is that the film shall be of first-rate screen quality.

A bad print of a sound film can be passable on a very good projector. It can be excruciating on a bad one. Now one must admit that the quality of the output of some laboratories leaves much to be desired. The chief reason for this, as we pointed out in our last issue, is the critical man-power position in the film printing trade. A high proportion of the key personnel, being young men (for the industry is itself young) are in the Services. It is true that before the war there were grounds for complaint, but this the stimulus of competition—impossible now—would have rapidly removed.

When the conditions which create this state of affairs no longer obtain, one will confidently look to the patient not only to recover his health but to have learned how to keep fitter in the future. It is to be hoped, too, that his new nimbleness will effect a corresponding ease on the pocket by bringing down the cost of film hire.

There are not a few enthusiasts, however, who would be willing to pay even more for an evening's programme of films if that would induce the libraries to release them. We refer to the steadily increasing number of 'conversionists.'

It would be idle to pretend that, with so much activity of the crude experimental type in evidence, it is not surprising that most libraries should have branded all amateur experiment as a menace. But the serious and responsible amateur constructor does exist and should be provided for. Reports from two separate sources on the difficulties of obtaining sound films for use on non-commercial projectors have been accompanied by the almost identical suggestion that the libraries might consider supplying films at either a slightly higher rate, or on payment of an increased deposit, during a 'probation' period.

Of course, no library can afford to risk a single copy under present conditions, since cash compensation does not mean that stock will be available for reprinting a ruined film. But it is pointed out that many machines of reputable make have now seen long service, and a large number of them may be so badly worn, or out of adjustment, as to be a greater menace to films than a well-cared-for conversion.

The libraries should bear in mind that many amateurs are driven to using converted apparatus not alone because they are primarily of a mechanical bent, but also because it is impossible to buy new projectors. They will be the first to buy commercial sound projectors when they are once more available, and will then undoubtedly remember any consideration—or lack of it—shown them at present.

Peace on earth! Goodwill towards men!
For how long have these age-old Christmas greetings seemed but a quaint, archaic tag from an old-fashioned Christmas card?
And now, at last, in all sincerity and hope we can send these good wishes to our readers at home and overseas, and with them a toast to a new year which shall herald a full, rich life, based on the sure foundations of justice and honour.

Filming Invisibility

It is the permanent virtues—those impalpable qualities of vision and inspiration—which make and shape our life, and which should mould our films. But, you may ask, how on earth can a film-maker be expected to deal with things he can't see? In this article a well-known short film producer answers this question.

By **ANDREW BUCHANAN**

NO, this is not a treatise on micro-cinematography, nor even on ghosts, I'm sorry to say, for I like super-imposed people walking through walls at wrong moments.

Actually, it is about post-war filming, and the shaping of the right kind of plans for that wonderful time when one can take up one's camera again, load it with stock, and . . . and . . . ?

Quite so—what next?

16mm. has made enormous strides in every possible non-theatrical direction during the period in which most amateurs have been compelled to lay aside their cameras, but now, as the future comes slowly into focus, it is time to think about filming once more, and to benefit, wherever possible, from production progress made in the war years.

The amateur must neither stand still nor go backwards—both popular pursuits in all spheres. He must progress, not only, nor even primarily, in technical skill, but in the developing of the right kind of viewpoint, which will govern his approach to all the subjects he films. And that is where the title of this article comes in—filming invisibility, which means, of course, filming the things which are imperishable—the undying qualities, the inspirations, the virtues of human individuals—and also their weaknesses by way of contrast.

Consider, for a moment, the startling extent to which our collectivist civilisation is concerned with the things that are seen—with temporal matters—a habit which war develops alarmingly. Everything, or almost everything is rejected which one cannot see, touch, grasp, smell, drink or destroy. We have come to think and live in terms of pictures without horizons, and unless we are extremely careful, this unconscious approach to life will be reflected in our work, on our screens, with the result that, sooner or later, we shall be told we lack vision.

Here's a practical example.

A film-maker returns to his native town and decides to make a film of it, or what is left of it after the war. Nothing could be

easier, he exclaims. He knows the place inside out; he was born there. And as it is a sunny day he might as well begin at once. He thinks he will start with the High Street and show that gap where the movie palace used to be, opposite the bus garage that isn't any more, near that monster block of flats which never should have been, but still is, of course! You see, he is immediately concerned with things as they are—with what he can see. He looks no further, and would be most annoyed if you told him he probably does not know his home town at all—in a fundamental way.

But, you may ask, how on earth can a film-maker be expected to deal with things he can't see? Isn't film a medium for projecting visible things?

Of course, but if film-makers content themselves, as they frequently do, solely with visibility, and ignore the influence of the invisible factor—the foundation of all life—their work will tend to become superficial. There are films, the great ones, which achieve greatness because they are built on fundamentals. They strip the veil off the illusion that material things are of first importance. You will remember "You Can't Take It With You," and you will recall the work of Preston Sturges, who is rarely content to accept traditional behaviour until he has had a look behind the scenes and checked up whether this or that pomp or pageantry is cloaking a lot of bunkum or evil or commercial corruption. His latest, "Hail the Conquering Hero," is an excellent example of the art of filming invisibility. In visible terms the film reveals the invisible qualities of humanity. To deal only in visible things is to glamourise emptiness.

But to return to our film-maker, and his desire to begin shooting his home-town production. If he used to read *Amateur Cine World* before the war, he will recall the warnings I often issued about the danger of rushing out with a camera before one's script has been thoroughly planned and completed. Apparently the entire world is going to change after this war is over, and so it may

be found refreshing to learn that my pre-war warnings remain entirely unchanged! The plan; the script—and then the actual producing. And so it is with this home town film. First, that balanced viewpoint needs to be acquired. A viewpoint which is based on the realisation that only permanence matters. Prefabricated houses may be all right until real ones can be built, but let us avoid prefabricated films—or even films about prefabricated houses unless they explain why they are necessary, instead of being content to show a row of them being erected in fifteen minutes. Briefly, one needs to differentiate instinctively between temporary and permanent values—to recognise shallowness, and never be deceived by things as they appear on the surface. Ordinary moral rules, you think. No, quite unusual ones when applied to the film-maker, for they enable him to approach his subjects with sharpened powers of perception. Many of the gay, idiotic features which he might have featured, he may reject as unimportant. This approach is the antithesis of escapism. That home town is a symbol of countless achievements, disappointments, sorrows, joys. It goes back for years. The visible activity is ever-changing—passing away—to be imperceptibly superseded by the activity of another generation—similar, to the casual observer; full of differences to eyes which look beyond and beneath.

Instead, therefore, of making a film that will show how the market place stood up to bombing, or, alternatively, how little the old place has changed—that is, visibly changed—since you have been round the world a few times—try beginning at the beginning. You will probably be the first person who has troubled to find out and project why your town was ever really built, and what caused it to expand.

Numerous fascinating records will enable you to make a film-sketch of the past. Perhaps the town is near a river; or the coast. Possibly, iron-stone is nearby, or china clay. Maybe a great visionary once lived there whose preaching influenced not only your ancestors but the architecture of the time. Or the life of the whole place may have been dependent, for hundreds of years, on agriculture. Before a film can really show what a place is like to-day, it must show its relation to the past.

It is true that the foundations of the civic buildings, the cathedral, and the corn exchange are built of stone, but not only of stone. Deeper down are the real foundations—the toil, inspiration, determination and vision of the builders—your ancestors. Invisible qualities without which

the visible structures would never have come into being. It is just these invisible foundations of your town which need to form the foundations of your film. They are invulnerable. Wars come and go (we hope), but the creative fire in man remains unquenched and true progress continues, bestowing benefits on generations which have never bothered to look back.

In urging this sensitive approach to film-making it is neither possible nor desirable to try and indicate production shot by shot. Of greater value is to infuse into the mind of the film-maker the approach he should make. Maybe, old prints, parchment leaves, ancient stones, worn pathways, plaques, historic shop-fronts, tombs, statues, can help to build up the past upon which the present prosperity of your town has been constructed, and upon which the future will depend. Perhaps, on your return, there will be flags galore, celebrations, social functions rising to an hysterical pitch. Admirable film material to record the end of hostilities, but of little fundamental value. Nor will it be a time of gladness for everyone. True human progress—symbolised by advance in medicine (see that the hospital is well-covered in your film), in sculpture, music, literature and architecture, is rarely celebrated with flags, for it is creative progress, but upon it depends the cultural and physical well-being of us all. Architecture. The rebuilding of your town. Will its worthwhile traditions be preserved; its treasured buildings be restored? Will it become a mammoth housing estate to feed hungry new factories, which are going to surround the whole neighbourhood, symbolising a further mechanical advance in the particular industry or craft originated by your ancestors? Questions need to be raised in a comprehensive film. Plans need to be seen in detail and commented upon.

Therefore, begin by listing down all you have discovered about the past, present and future of your town, whether filmable or not. Then divide your notes into visible and invisible groups. As you will probably depend entirely upon captions to explain your story and basic approach, you will need to learn the difference between describing what one is either about to see, or has just seen, and supplementing your visuals with supporting statements which cannot become visible—after making quite sure, of course, that your visuals are sufficiently well chosen to be self-explanatory.

Although a recorded commentary will not, I imagine, be possible for you, I am going to give an example of how this form of verbal narrating is skilfully used to present



Spring evening at "The Edge of the World." Peter, James, the Catechist and some of the Islanders gather around Ruth and her baby.

The Edge of the World

Production .. Rock Studios, Boreham Wood, 1936-7.
Trade Review .. July 15, 1937.
English Release .. January, 1938.
Distributed by .. B.I.E.D.
Length .. 7,300 feet—81 minutes.
Directed by .. Michael Powell.
Scenario .. Michael Powell.
Photography .. Ernest Palmer, Skeets Kelly, Monty Berman.
Montage .. Derek Twist.
Sound .. L. K. Tregellas.
Derivation .. Documentary plus story by Michael Powell.
Musical Director .. Cyril Ray.
Choral Effects .. The Women of the Glasgow Orpheus Choir.
Conductor .. Sir Hugh S. Robertson.
Orchestrations .. W. L. Williamson.

The Players

Peter Manson .. John Laurie.
 Ruth, his daughter .. Belle Chrystall
 Robbie, her brother .. Eric Berry
 Jean, their grandmother .. Kitty Kirwan
 James Gray .. Finlay Currie
 Andrew, his son .. Niall MacGinnis
 The Catechist .. Grant Sutherland
 The Laird .. Campbell Robson
 The Trawler Skipper .. George Summers
 The Doctor .. Jack Lambert
 The Eagle .. Mr. Ramshaw
 (owned by Capt. Knight)

Also the people of the island of Foula.
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FAMOUS LIBRARY FILMS No. 24

A Critical Commentary

by

H. A. V. BULLEID, M.A.

THEME . . . The Outer Isles of Scotland are abandoned by Man at the call of mechanised civilisation.

TREATMENT . . . In Prologue, Andrew Gray stands beside Peter Manson's memorial stone on the deserted island of Hirta and recalls to a young Captain and his wife the island of ten years ago . . .

On a bright Sunday morning the whole island attends Chapel. Afterwards, Robbie Manson tells his sister Ruth and her fiancée, Andrew, of his engagement: he is leaving the island. Andrew opposes the idea of evacuation; but then he is engaged to an island girl, Robbie argues, accustomed to the hard life. A quarrel starts—ending in a challenge to a dangerous climb.

The same argument fills the island Parliament: and the elders agree to the contest. The boats put out. Ruth desperately warns them. The climb starts. Andrew leads. Robbie takes a dangerous chance, falls to his death.

Peter and Ruth summon all to the funeral. (Funeral sequence: Peter forbids Andrew

and Ruth to meet—cut from 9mm. version.)

The sheep are run in for plucking. Andrew and Ruth meet in a tragic love scene.

The Laird comes. The tweed and shawls are booked out. Andrew leaves for the mainland.

Ruth is alone with the baby she is to bear Andrew. She launches a float to take him a message. Peter Manson sees it whilst rescuing a sheep over the cliff edge, recovers the message, learns the truth, comforts his daughter.

The baby captivates and reunites Peter and James Gray. (There is a grand outdoor dance, attended happily by the whole island—cut from 9mm. version.) Floats are launched with a letter for Andrew.

At Lerwick, Andrew receives the letter through a trawler Skipper, and joins his crew. A storm forces them to shelter at Hirta. The baby is ill, and Ruth desperate, when Andrew arrives. He takes them back to the mainland, a doctor is fetched by motor launch, an operation successfully performed in the trawler cabin.

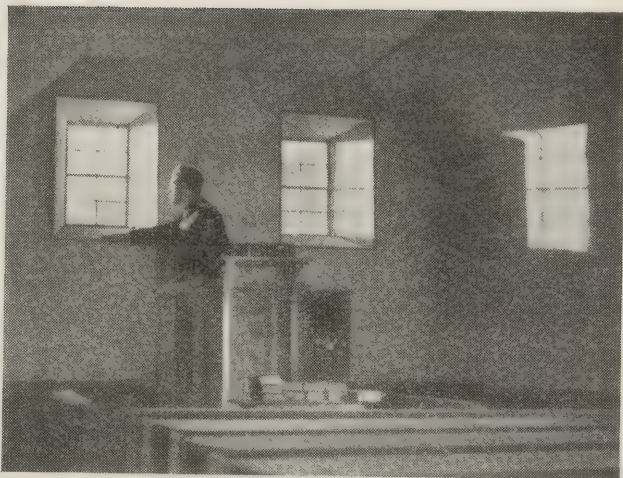
Peter bows to the inevitable evacuation, signs the petition to the Laird.

The islanders, with their belongings, are trooping aboard the evacuation steamer when Peter sets off to collect a guillemot's egg—through the mist, over the moor, over the cliff edge. His dog follows. James Gray, uneasy, seeks him. The dog barks frantically, the rope breaks, James Gray reverently uncovers.

In Epilogue, the island is lonely, serene, deserted.

The Edge of the World adorns one of the few really bright pages in the history of British films. Inspired by its director as a result of reading about the evacuation of St. Kilda in 1930, and financed by Joe Rock, an expedition spent most of June to October 1936 on Foula in the Shetlands, where practically the entire film was shot. The island has over 100 inhabitants who do, in fact, live at the edge of the world: January 19th of this year marked the end of a 44-day period of isolation due to tempestuous seas, though there is now a beam-wireless installation.

The theme of inevitable évacuation is one



The Catechist. Interior actually shot in the chapel on Foula

of sadness and defeat. Therefore the film leaves one with these emotions, and therefore also it cannot be classed as epic. It can and does, however, present a strong drama of the island interwoven with documentary narrative, which is undoubtedly superior to both *Man of Aran* and *Chang*—to name two acclaimed documentaries.

Wisely, Michael Powell made the island the central figure in the drama. Its changing moods contain every phase of the narrative and add to the dramatic conflict of the humans—disposed thus:—

Fathers	Peter Manson (inflexibly opposed to evacuation)	James Gray (bows to the inevitable)
Sons ..	Robbie Manson (urges evacuation)	Andrew Gray (opposes evacuation)
Daughter	Ruth Manson ... engaged to Andrew	

Admirably restrained and natural acting, maintained (by skilful direction) correctly in key with the natural sets, makes these five characters memorable. One of the best tributes to their success is that, though they severally occupy at least 80 per cent of the footage, the film has been classed as documentary by many reviewers: *Kine Weekly* of 15-7-1937 remarked . . .

Outstanding documentary entertainment . . . the early scenes, which take the form of a prologue, are a waste of valuable footage—but once the theme

is given a chance to develop logically, the two phases, the Nature element and the human, merge smoothly and with stern dramatic expression. The film has superb spectacle, superlative camera work, and, above all, imagination, a quality all too rare in British films.

A glance at the treatment reveals the fine opportunities presented, and these have been fully exploited. The arrangement of material is not perfect—the most dramatic sequence, the cliff climb, comes early; but the sad climax to the life of the island, symbolised when Peter Manson "goes over," is beautifully done, losing only a little in power because of its inevitability. The lengthy (6-minute) prologue is most unfortunate. It lacks entertainment value, serves no introductory nor dramatic purpose, shows us two irrelevant and completely colourless extra characters, is indeed horribly redundant. That Pathéscope should have retained it, yet cut the dance sequence, is another inexplicable tragedy.

Other British films released in January, 1938, included *Knight Without Armour* (by Jacques Feyder, with Dietrich, Donat), *Action for Slander* (by Tim Whelan, with Clive Brook, Ann Todd), and *Oh, Mr. Porter* (by Marcel Varnel, with Will Hay). *The Edge of the World* tops this list—and is unique in having all-British players and technicians.

Michael Powell started as odd-job man (age 19) with Rex Ingram and Harry Lachman at Nice on *Mare Nostrum* (1926, with Alice Terry). His all-round apprenticeship included playing comedy parts in Ingram's *Magician* and *Garden of Allah*. Then he worked with Jerry Jackson in England (Rynox, etc.), proceeding to *Red Ensign* and *The Phantom Light* for G.B. He recently made for The Archers *Colonel Blimp* (again with John Laurie) and *A Canterbury Tale*; and is now in Mull shooting *I Know Where I'm Going*, with Wendy Hiller and Roger Livesey.

Considerable leadership is necessary to maintain morale in such an isolated expedition over so long a period and in face of many set-backs: and the trials and tribulations are excellently described in Powell's book "200,000 Feet on Foula"—at present out of print (but in your Public Library).

The film has consistently excellent photographic quality, with patches of real brilliance, notably in the dance sequence and in the final shots in the mist. There is, too, a profusion of long shots, all remarkable in content and in composition.

The main title is very well presented, prefaced by two titles expressing the theme, in graceful black lettering against a cloudy white. This style is maintained through the credits and cast, except the final credit to

the Foula Islanders, which is super-imposed on a grand L.S. of Foula: but then the title fades and we are left with this shot opening the Prologue, suggesting we are at Foula, whereas the story is of Hirta, the largest of the St. Kilda group. In L.S. a yacht lies off the island . . . the Captain studies his chart: inset, Hirta. ". . . it means . . ." says Andrew, the pilot, ". . . death." Cut to C.S., a black eagle: it swoops over a young lamb. Quick cutting suggests fear, pursuit; but the symbol is crude. In full L.S., Andrew hanging back by the jetty, the Captain fires—kills the eagle—a pointless and illogical action. Andrew stands beside the derelict Hirta Post Office: pale ghosts from the grim past troop before him; each looks at him, with a hint of reproach.

By the edge of the towering cliff is a memorial stone:—*Peter Manson . . . gone over*. Andrew is troubled. Far over the sea, a vaguely-discernible haze, are the hills of Scotland . . . Memories crowd over Andrew and he recalls a Sunday morning of ten years ago: in a lengthy mix over C.S. of him speaking, waving barley and folk going to Chapel and the sound of the bell fill the screen. So ends the Prologue: in it occur most of the film's few errors: Andrew's too-youthful appearance for "ten-years-after," the memorial stone with no trace of weathering, the worried expression worn by the holiday-making Captain (played by the director), are very unfortunate—but happily atoned for by later brilliance.

The Chapel sequence (pruned in 9mm.) is a grand introduction to the characters. The Catechist preaches on, while the young people fidget and get rebuked by Peter. Restless dogs are tethered outside. Granny Manson sleeps in the sun by her croft, a kitten on her lap. The chapel interiors are not brilliant, but are genuine; most of the roof was temporarily removed to make them possible. Afterwards old James Gray congratulates the Catechist on his sermon . . . " . . . one hour and fifteen minutes! . . . and mind ye! every sentence sound theology."

Discovered first in vast long shots on the lofty cliffs, the silver sea far below, Robbie tells Ruth of his engagement and intention to leave the island. The sight of Andrew on a rocky crag brings Ruth to her feet: "Get down, you're frightening Ruth!" yells Robbie with a tinge of sarcasm. Andrew comes up, claims Ruth: the dialogue is finely natural, the modelling of the medium and close-shots admirable. Andrew learns of the engagement: "I'm not bringing her to the island—now or ever," says Robbie; and so the quarrel starts. In low-angle mid-shot Andrew stands a little apart. Ruth

looks uneasily from one to the other. The dialogue and action are crisp, incisive. L.S. shows the 800ft. high sheer cliff of Wester Hoevdi: Robbie challenges Andrew to the climb, he accepts. Then dramatically,

(a) C.S. Ruth exclaims. . . . "Look—
(b) F.L.S. hills in distant haze, (as in Prologue).
—the hills of Scotland" Slow fade-out.

Parliament meets by the boats: Robbie states his case: Peter Manson's bitter opposition is excellently conveyed by a low-angle shot of him walking a few paces apart, while the sound track carries the hated logic. Old James Gray agrees, but there is indecision. "Let the winner have the way of it," urges Andrew, keen on the climb, and points out that that decision would be more final than a thousand years of arguing. "Too risky," says James. In striking, harsh low angle C.M.S., "I see no objection," says Peter: and Andrew seizes on it, and all at once the screen is full of movement as the men make for the boats. An excellent L.S. pan from high angle follows the boats to the sea. Ruth, a remote, tiny figure, runs towards them. The Catechist remonstrates in vain with the stubborn Peter. Ruth stands between the two men, desperately urges them to stop. . . . "I'll lose you both . . . I felt it when I saw the mountains in the sky." But a call from the others makes them push on; she is left standing whilst, with excellent counterpoint, the boat is pushed directly away from the camera down into the sea.

The women of the island occupy the lower part of the cliff to watch the climb. The boats are heading towards the starting-point. Ruth tells her fears to old Grannie Manson. A cloud shadow spreads along the mighty cliff, in superb long shot that represents the theme of the struggle. The boats reach the cliff. Ruth dashes to join the rest of the women. Andrew impresses on Robbie that he must take the right channel at the cliff top, the left is shorter but dangerous. They await the starting signal. The cloud shadow hangs over the cliff. Peter gives the signal. . .

There are many superb shots in the climb sequence. Rocky crags jutting over the sea, ledges on sheer cliff, massive balanced boulders; sometimes from above, sometimes from below, with excellent choice and with occasional close shots, the climbers are followed, and intercut are the watchers on the cliff, and in the boats, and the Catechist in his chapel, and Ruth: once Robbie looks down; we see specks of boats far below. Andrew leads. Water cascades over the left channel. Robbie hesitates, moves on. . . James Gray shouts "Robbie's taken the left channel—it's not possible." Peter says one word only: "In!"—but his face is set.



Ruth (Belle Chrystall) with Andrew (Niall MacGinnis) in *THE EDGE OF THE WORLD* (1937, by Michael Powell).



"I'LL LOSE YOU BOTH—I FELT IT WHEN I SAW THE MOUNTAINS IN THE SKY", says Ruth to Andrew and Robbie.



(Note silent-background lines on the Visatone-type sound track.) Parliament: Finlay Currie as James Gray.

Andrew gains the top, a tiny, triumphant figure. Ruth waves. Robbie is caught in the streaming water, unable to move. Then . . .

		Frames
a	L.S. Peter clammers ashore from boat..	94
b	M.S. Robbie clings on, amid the rushing water	47
c	L.S. (low angle) Andrew on top looks down	31
d	M.S. (high angle) rushing water, sea far below..	41
e	M.S. Robbie struggles to pull himself up	28
f	FL.S. (low angle) Andrew dashes along cliff edge..	18
g	M.S. (high angle, black against sea) Ruth and two other women gaze upwards	44
h	FL.S. Peter struggles up cliff face	91
i	M.S. (as e) Robbie	55
j	C.S. his hand amid rushing water	44
k	C.S. (from beneath) water pouring over edge	30
l	FC.S. eyes looking anxiously upwards	33
m	FL.S. the cloud shadow over the cliff	15
n	L.S. Peter struggles along cliff face	49
o	M.S. (as i) Andrew reaches towards Robbie	48
p	C.S. their hands nearly meet	27
q	M.S. (as q) Robbie cries out in despair	23
r	C.S. the Catechist (shadowed)	23
s	M.S. (as q) Robbie cries out, shakes his head	8
t	C.S. (as p) their hands	10
u	M.S. Robbie goes over	15
v	L.S. (as n) (Peter against cliff face) falls	22
w	M.S. a wave breaks thunderously	35
x	M.S. Peter, stricken	35
y	M.S. (high angle, black against sea) Ruth falls forward	62
z	CM.S. Grannie Manson slowly rises to her feet	87
aa	FL.S. (as m) cloud shadow darkens the cliff	180

Slow fade-out.

The only faults that could be found with this admirable sequence are the failure to maintain purely rhythmic shot-lengths (which could so easily have been done as there is no dialogue interference); the error in length of shot (m) which is disconcertingly short; and the photographic defect in the shots of hands, in which the angle chosen gives an unpleasant effect. But the shot-assembly is brilliant, in particular the impact of (w) and the sombre effect of (z) and (aa).

For dramatic content (k) is memorable. The arrangement of the accompanying music and sound is beyond reproach.

The two sombre, mourning figures of Peter and Ruth come from the distance up to Andrew and James, outside their croft . . .

a CM.S. Ruth and Peter: he says "*James and Andrew, I bid ye to the funeral of Robbie Manson, to-morrow, at twelve.*"

b CM.S. Andrew and James . . . James replies, "*We will come.*"

c CM.S. (as a) Ruth . . . and Peter.

d FL.S. They turn away.

MIX TO

e M.S. (pan) They come to another croft: Peter says to the people "*... I bid ye prepare for the funeral of Robbie Manson, to-morrow, at twelve.*"

MIX TO

f L.S. A carpenter. Their two shadows enter the frame, he acknowledges them "*I bid ye prepare for the funeral of Robbie Manson, to-morrow, at twelve.*"

g L.S. Another croft exterior "*... I bid ye to the funeral of Robbie Manson, to-morrow, at twelve.*"

MIX TO

h L.S. Another croft exterior.

MIX TO

i FL.S. Another, in silhouette "*... to-morrow ... at twelve.*"

MIX TO

j FL.S. Another, in the light of the setting sun "*... to-morrow ... at twelve.*"

MIX TO

k FL.S. Tiny figures in the distance, they wend their way home "*... to-morrow ...*"

Slow fade-out.

The tragic ritual is expressed with exquisite poetry. Shots (g) to (k) are lovely in composition, the mixes are flawless, the feeling of detachment increases as the dreary invitation is repeated, and the sound track replaces the image of Peter partly in (f) and wholly thereafter:—"*to-morrow ... at twelve.*"

After the funeral we briskly return to the lively documentary sequence of sheep-plucking. Fine long-shots cover the round-up, and the women are shown at work. Far apart from the hubbub, Ruth and Andrew meet, embrace; Andrew sadly reproaches Peter's animosity. They were to have been married that day . . .

The Laird arrives by steamer. James Gray points him out to the Catechist as he enters the boat. Ashore, he learns the situation from old James, comments "*... it's worst for them left behind.*" Andrew also confides in him:

The climb sequence. Andrew on the Devil's Elbow.



that Peter's unreasonable attitude forces him to leave the island: this in a restless panning M.S. of the two men. The Laird tries to help; he chats to old James about what a loss Andrew's going would be, in a tone nicely calculated to be overheard by Peter, standing near. The latter expresses his unbending resolution in a finely-acted close-up: then with formal apology ("I have ma sheep to feed") he leaves them, in harsh M.S. with the sun at right angles: MIX TO full long shot of steamer in harbour. The parting is handled with a measured simplicity that is most effective. Andrew shakes hands with the long line of islanders: quickly embraces Ruth: Peter will not unbend. From his father, a pat on the shoulder and "Take care o' yourself, lad," as he enters the boat. But, superb aside, giving insight of fatherly feeling (when Andrew is out of earshot) he admonishes one of the obviously careful men to take care of his box. Then, camera on boat, comes a magnificent shot looking along the oar used for shoving off, showing the receding, waving crowd lining the quay.

Ruth stands on a promontory—another magnificent full long shot. In M.S. she leans a little against a rock: then, superimposed, the relentless waves—distant then closer—break over her close-up. The photography is of great beauty. The sense—alone—is vividly conveyed.

Old James talks to the Catechist amongst the cabbages. They have survived that winter, but never another . . . they must reason with Peter. Close-up of a stake holding a rope that disappears over cliff edge introduces Peter, rescuing a sheep from below. The camera emphasises the drop, using the rope as a line of the pictorial composition. Meanwhile, M.S. discovers Ruth by the sea, launching a little boat attached to an air-filled bladder. From high above, Peter sees the float, and in a series of excellent long and mid-shots he descends and retrieves it as the tide washes it back to the rocks. With slow, methodical care typical of his character, he opens it, finds coin and a note to post the enclosed letter, addressed to Andrew Gray, c/o Post Office, Lerwick, Shetland. Wisely, the text of the letter is not shown: the detached L.S. of Peter sitting reading it is significant; but the counterpoint of cutting to a shot of Ruth, returning and realising, has terrific dramatic impact. Then . . .

- a M.S. Peter sits reading.
- b C.M.S. Ruth looks dully at him
- c L.S. he reads, thinks, looks up and round, sees her . . .
- d L.S. she looks back at him.
- e M.S. (as a) he gets up, walks . . .
- f C.M.S. (as b) she looks, unflinching

- g C.M.S. (low angle, over her shoulder) he comes right up, says . . . "Is this true?"
- h C.M.S. (high angle, over his shoulder) she half-defiantly replies . . . "Yes."
- i C.S. He puts an arm about her, she rests her head against him, he says . . . "Poor lassie . . ."—comforts her.
Slow fade-out.

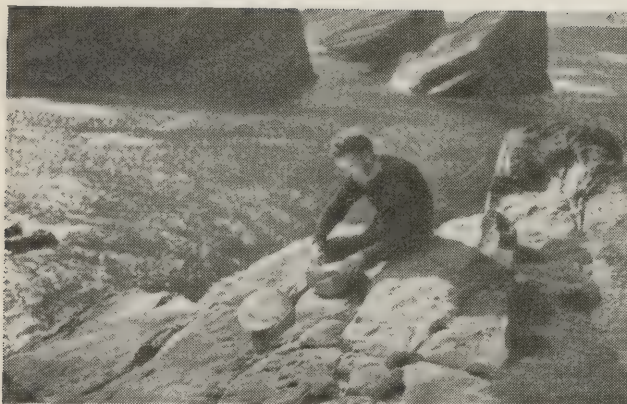
The wind rages: but in a sheltered part of the island the evening Spring sun is warm and the women sit among the wild flowers: Ruth sits by her baby. A grand M.S. and C.S. of Peter and James show the latter self-consciously lapsing into chuckles at the baby. The Catechist plays softly on his violin. Then (with curiously inappropriate trick mix) he plays a lively air: the only remaining shot (in 9mm.) of the dance scene.

Peter and James launch floats into the boiling waves.

Full L.S. introduces Lerwick (a geographical muddle, since Leverburgh on Harris is the mainland port for Hirta) and, concisely, a C.S. of fish tipped into a barrel fixes the trawler trade. A skipper approaches Andrew, mentions Robbie was once his engineer, then discloses he has a letter, picked up from one of the floats. The sound here is admirable, the background noises genuine—the sequence was actually shot on the quay at Lerwick (pruned in 9mm. version). A wipe-mix to M.S. of Andrew reading the letter is followed by the trawler skipper's kindly offer of a job, with the suggestion that they will work off Hirta . . .

Storm! Lowering clouds, crashing waves, boiling white foam against black rock. Indoors (the genuine croft interior is nicely arranged) the Catechist is with Ruth, who tends the sick baby. The dialogue is terse enough but rather over-obvious in stressing the doctor-on-mainland idea. Pruning has increased the melodramatic element in the arrival of Andrew, the journey on the trawler, the motor-boat dash for doctor, the operation and Andrew's final "I've got you both safe now, and you're not going back." The flurry of getting a kettle of water, supervised by James, provides an excellent flash of comedy. The cabin interiors were shot at the Rock Studios.

Concisely, the next sequence fades-in on C.S. of the petition to the Laird to evacuate the island. Peter appends his signature: then, in four fine shots, he walks a little apart from the rest of the Parliament, and superimposed on his low-angle medium close-up come scenes from the past life on the island that form his very religion—his only idea of life. Another mix reveals Peter against an island background draped in mist: it is the day of the evacuation. "They'll all be off by noon," remarks James. The mist is



The float sequence. John Laurie as Peter Manson.

all around. The islanders with their belongings straggle towards the steamer. The selection of material is thoughtful. Peter makes an excuse to James to leave the scene: he's going to collect a guillemot's egg, for which he was offered five pounds. In a long shot charged with remote uneasiness, he strides away beyond the last croft. His dog breaks loose, sets after him. Men and animals proceed on to the steamer—the sky is darkened, an ingenious touch. Peter strides up on to the moor: his eyes take in the vast sweep of the island, and we see it spread out, part concealed by the mist, part decked with bright sunshine; and we can understand its wistful appeal (these long shots must rank amongst the finest in the history of cinema). James grows uneasy, goes to seek Peter. High-angle L.S. shows Peter driving in a stake at the cliff-edge: and in detail shots he knots his rope with characteristic thoroughness. James hurries on through the mist. The dog scrambles along. In a memorable M.S. Peter casts the coil of rope over the cliff edge: beyond is

the sound. The rope frays—Peter proceeds up the cliff face—the dog barks frantically—James comes up—then there is the crash of a mighty wave, the last strand parts—the dog is all at once quiet, and old James silently takes off his cap. The Catechist calls out for them from afar, but is answered only by an echo from the mighty cliff: mix to C.S. of Peter's memorial stone; then a slow pan from the cliff edge covers the silent island.

It is above all the photographic excellence that makes this closing sequence so remarkable. Apart from the difficulty of maintaining the misty backgrounds, which has been successfully overcome and represents an achievement superior to that of Tissé in the early-morning Odessa harbour sequence in *The Battleship Potemkin*, some shots are of exceptional beauty, notably those with James. The black grandeur of the mighty cliff as it echoes the call of the Catechist throws back at the audience a sense of sad desolation beyond words: the director has captured that grim, awe-inspiring majesty of nature, as Pabst did in *The White Hell of Pitz Palu*.

STOLEN GOODS

A G.B. sound projector, model H-16, serial number 240, a considerable amount of equipment and three 16mm. films: "A Window in London" (8 reels, sound), "Beauty Shoppe" (1 reel, sound) and "Jamboree" (4 reels, silent) have been stolen from the Christ Church Film Unit. Anyone offered the above should contact Rev. Cecil Clark, 13, Woburn Square, London, W.C.1. (Phone: Museum 7956) or their nearest police station.

NEW G.B. CATALOGUE

The catalogue of the famous Gebescope Library, which has just reached the eighth edition, should be in the hands of all 16mm. sound projectionists who wish to screen not only the latest available features but also the films which have something of the permanence of classics.

The names of stars with which it is studded read like an honours list of Hollywood and Elstree elite: Marlene Dietrich, Basil Rathbone, Deanna Durbin, Eric Portman, Irene Dunne, Charles Boyer, Anna

Neagle, Ralph Richardson and scores of other top-liners in films ranging from musical comedy to drama.

In addition there is an unique series of British Council films, together with many well-known series of cartoons and shorts, including the ever-green "Secrets of Life" series.

The catalogue costs 6d. from the Gebescope Film Library, Woodchester, Nr. Stroud, Glos.

THE END OF THE ROAD

We are now on the last lap of the European War, and this is the time when the greatest effort must be made.

We are grateful for the relaxation of some restrictions already, but there is still the same urgent need for many of the duties imposed on us by wartime—chief among which is salvage. Paper is an important component part of many articles of the modern soldier's equipment, and we at home must continue to contribute our full quota of waste paper and cardboard.

The future gleams brightly ahead; let us do all we can to hasten the beginning of peace.

The Christmas Show

By **TERENCE V. STRONG**

FIVE years of war. Five years of scarce films and scarcer time to film, and now, for those of us who are fortunate, the pleasure and problem of this year's Christmas film show. It is certain that very few of us will have much new film to offer an audience rather too familiar with our past productions. How can we make the best possible use of the old material?

Of course there is the film library to help, but let us be honest and admit that audiences regard hired silent films as very small beer. All right to fill in, but it is the personal films that are "box office." And maybe there is nothing new to show; your guests have seen it all before, perhaps more than once.

An odd charger of film, a mere 30 feet or so which you may not have exposed because it could not cover any subject adequately—this is uncommonly useful now. Take all those old films and give yourself a private show. With a lot of thought and perhaps two or three showings, you may see how one could be re-edited to give a new slant. Maybe you can combine two films with new titles and the result can be a lively new feature. Don't forget that collection "library", if it justifies the name, of odd shots. Some of them are bound to work in, and it won't hurt to take out a few as well.

Then there are those little bits of filming you have done this year. Hopeless to make a film out of them—according to peace-time standards. Quite true, but what if it is Woolton pie, it's fashionable to enjoy that sort of thing now, so be unashamed and call it Wartime Medley, 1944, or some such title. You put on the last of your old films. You wince as the title flashes on the screen. It is one of your earliest family films. It seems horribly naive, with your self-conscious relations bathing, stroking cats and looking strong and silent. You've come a long way since then—none of that posed artificially—you're more sophisticated. Ugh! You've seen it so many times that you hardly look at the picture, you only see the fine scratches raining down the screen. And your prospective audience has seen it umpteen times as well. So what? Make it a parlour game. Start the ball rolling with a cine quiz. Hand out a sheet of paper all round; run the film through and obscure a shot here and there, say about six. Then ask them to write down who-did-what in the shots they

did not see: A packet of dried egg to the winner.

Alternatively you could take one or two old films to pieces temporarily and pick out all the big close-ups of your family and friends. Decide what their various expressions might be indicating in terms of wartime experiences. Father grinning broadly might be "Home Guard to be disbanded." A startled female face might be "buzz bomb?" Splice up these pieces in any order. Present each competitor with a list of the events which are supposed to have produced these expressions and ask him to pair them with the appropriate face. Suitably reward the one who comes closest to your own solution.

Obviously an old suit needs pressing and valeting if it is to appear smart and youthful, so if your programme is not adventurous and novel, the least you can do is to make the show as smooth, slick and attractive as possible.

First, there are simple but often neglected precautions to be taken to prevent breakdowns. All splices should be tested and all connectors, adaptors and flex checked. Library films not infrequently merit attention. Secondly, there is showmanship. There is a logical order for the various items making up your programme. One sound rule at least is that your newest and best should be nearer the end than the beginning.

If you haven't done so already, why not make a sound-proof blimp for your projector? The back numbers of A.C.W. will help here.

Sound accompaniment? If you belong to the considerable band of enthusiasts who still project their films naked and unadorned, now is the time to make an easy start. Even the simplest of musical backgrounds will increase the effectiveness of your show ten-fold. A few records of melodious and unassertive light music will do wonders. A step further would be to choose records suitable to each film. At a pinch you can run your show to a wireless programme, providing you fit your time table to the *Radio Times*.

The double turntable in its simplest form is not as intricate or as expensive as it sounds. An ordinary portable gramophone may be used for effects records. If it is placed in some sort of lidded cabinet or box the sound effects can be faded in and out while the radiogram plays the general background music. Of course, sound accompaniment

"DO IT YOURSELF!"

practical ideas for the handyman

MULTIPLANE MODEL SETS

In each issue our contributor supplies worth-while ideas: things to make and things to do. Suggestions for gadgets are welcomed.

By G. A. GAULD, B.Sc.

IN a recent letter one of my readers makes the following remark: "Personally, I like single frame work because I feel I can have everything under control." That is a good point. There is, too, the matter of film economy; a very small supply of film stock will provide occupation for many a long winter evening.

There are, of course, many aspects of film production which employ the technique of single frame exposure. "Fancy" titles produced by this method may be intriguing, if rarely justified; pure faking for screen conjuring tricks may bring forth compliments from an appreciative audience but, to my way of thinking, the most satisfying branch of this work is to be found in puppet animation.

Unlike cartoon work, it does not require great skill with the drawing pen, and there is all the fun of building model sets as well as the making of the puppet characters for the film. A limit is set only by one's own imagination, and if the work is tedious at times there is always the thrill of seeing one's handiwork come to life on the screen by way of compensation.

The subject as a whole is a very large one and, for the present, I intend to confine my remarks entirely to one small portion; the construction and use of "multiplane" sets, to use a term which has come into use through the employment of a similar technique in the Disney cartoons.

We use model sets to give "depth" to the scene, either to provide space in a direction perpendicular to the screen in which our characters may move, or to give greater realism to the scene in a way which cannot be conveyed by a simple backdrop no matter how well it may be drawn. With this, camera movement is frequently associated because the effect is obtained by the changing proportions of perspective resulting from this camera movement in a model. If the camera is stationary the effect is partly obtained by differences in the degree of sharpness of focussing between the principal objects and other parts of the set.

Model sets are of two kinds. There is the model set constructed exactly to scale in all dimensions, such as that of an airport described in this magazine some years ago in

which take-offs, landings and views of the "airport" from the plane were required in the script. The other form of set maintains correct proportions at right angles to the camera axis, although the scale of each "plane" will differ, but the whole scene is "compressed" in a direction to and from the camera in order that considerable distances may be brought within the scope of a tiny model studio stage. It is with this type of "multiplane" set that we are concerned here, and its correct manipulation to obtain a "solid" and realistic effect on the screen.

Before we can talk of manipulation, however, we must first learn to construct the set; to break down the scene into planes and reproduce them to the correct scales when the scene is compressed into the limited depth of the model stage. For the same reason we will, for the moment, avoid the highly imaginative scene which we shall probably use in our fairy tale, and deal with a simple and normal scene in which general proportions are known. The ability to dissect and reconstruct such a simple scene will enable us later to construct the "imaginative" set so that it will be convincing on the screen.

Fig. 1, then, represents our scene in the form of a picture, or as it will be reproduced photographically on a single frame of film in the cine camera. For the sake of simplicity, throughout these articles I am going to assume that 16 mm. film is used with the standard lens of one inch focal length. Since a 16 mm. frame may be taken to be roughly 0.4" x 0.3", I have divided the picture into 40 x 30 parts so that each small square would represent a similar square on the actual frame of film, in which the length of each side is .01" or one hundredth of an inch.

Now the construction of the photographic image is controlled entirely by geometric proportions imposed by the lens of the

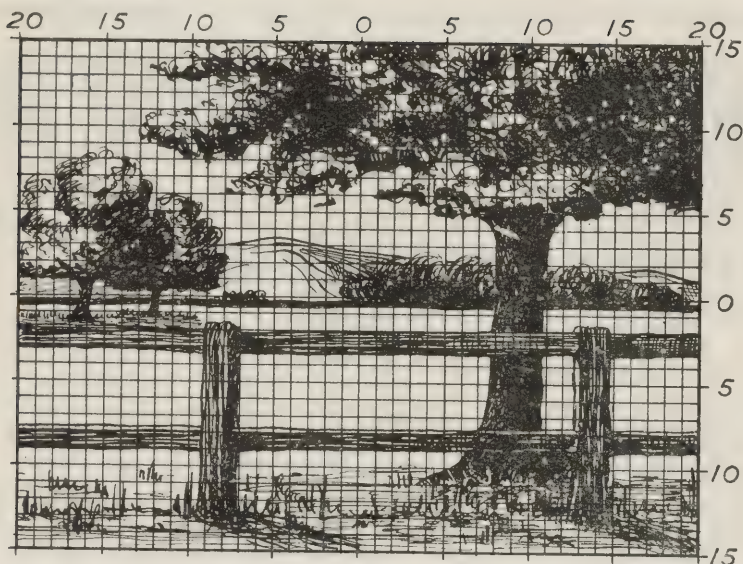


Fig. 1.

camera, and these are shown in Fig. 2. "O" is an object distant "D" from the camera, and "I" the image produced by a lens of focal length "F." Strictly speaking, "F" is equal to the focal length only when the object is at infinite distance, but in practice the difference is negligible, except in the case of very near objects.

Since the two triangles formed in the diagram are similar:—

$$\frac{O}{D} = \frac{I}{F}$$

and if the focal length of the lens is one inch we can determine the image size of a known object at a known distance:—

$$I = \frac{O}{D} \text{ (inches)}$$

and, conversely, we can calculate the actual size of an object at a known distance if we know the size of the image:—

$$O = I.D \text{ (inches)}$$

Again, if we know the size of the object and the size of its image, we can find its distance from the camera:—

$$D = \frac{O}{I} \text{ (inches)}$$

In building up our model set, we shall use all these variations of the formula because we must do more than merely draw a picture of the scene; we must plan out our space as well, as we shall see more clearly when the "multiplane" effect is discussed.

Let us return to our "natural" scene, in which the sizes and distances of the various objects are roughly known. In spite of this knowledge, planning is still required. For simplicity we shall assume the country to be fairly level, at least as far as the wood in the distance, and that the camera is set up level on a tripod with the lens axis four feet above ground level. The fence in the foreground of the picture borders a road along which our puppet will walk. Since we are dealing with a "natural" scene, our puppet will be life size and, say, 5' 6" tall.

Now we want our puppet to appear about $\frac{1}{3}$ length, with his head about the middle of the upper half of the picture. How far away must he be from the camera? Well, if he is 5' 6" tall and the camera is 4' above ground level, the top of his head will be

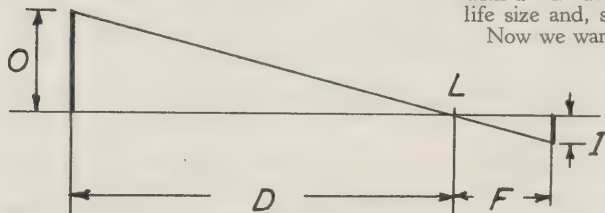


Fig. 2.

1' 6" above the camera axis, corresponding to the object height "O" in the formula. In the picture we want the top of his head to be about $7\frac{1}{2}$ squares above the middle, i.e. $7\frac{1}{2}$ "hundredths" or .075" on the film image, giving us the image height "I." Using the third form of the formula:—

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Distance " } &= \frac{1.5 \times 12''}{.075''} \\ &= 240 \text{ inches} \\ &= 20 \text{ feet}\end{aligned}$$

That seems to be all right.

Now we have drawn in the fence to give balance to the foreground; it should be about 3' 6" high. Where will that place it in the real thing? We have drawn the top of the fence 1.7 squares below the centre, equivalent to .017" on the film image, and if the fence is 3' 6" high the top of it will be 6" below camera axis. Thus:—

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Distance " } &= \frac{.5 \times 12''}{.017''} \\ &= 353'', \text{ say } 30'\end{aligned}$$

i.e., the fence will be 10 feet beyond the puppet, which is about right if he is walking in the middle of a country road.

Now the tree in the foreground is just beyond the fence, say 35' from the camera, and the lower branches will be some 6' from the ground, or 2' above camera axis. Using the first form of the formula:—

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Image height above axis " } &= \frac{2 \times 12''}{35 \times 12''} \\ &= .057''\end{aligned}$$

equivalent to 5.7 or nearly six squares above the middle of the picture. The lower branches as drawn correspond closely to this.

Now let us have a look at the ground levels, for we shall require these in our cutouts for the model set. Since the ground is level, it will be four feet below camera axis, both at the fence and the foot of the tree. For the fence:—

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Image depth below axis " } &= \frac{4 \times 12''}{30 \times 12''} \\ &= .133''\end{aligned}$$

or 13.3 squares below the middle of the picture. In the same way we find that the foot of the tree appears at 11.4 squares below the middle. We have thus found out all we want to know about the foreground objects.

The next step is to decide upon the distance

limit, clearly, in this case, the hill in the background. This will form our "hinge point" in the multiplane technique, and a convenient guess on the full size scale is that we place it a mile away, or, say, 5,000 feet from the camera. At that distance we know that the ground is getting pretty near to the horizon, so that the foot of the hill will lie very nearly on the centre line of the picture. We can, therefore, draw it in with confidence, and satisfactory composition is secured if we place its top $3\frac{1}{2}$ squares above the horizon line, equivalent to .035" on the film image. Its height is given by the second formula:—

$$\begin{aligned}O = I.D. &= .035 \times 5,000 \times 12'' \\ &\text{or } .035 \times 5,000 \text{ feet} \\ &= 175' \text{ above camera axis}\end{aligned}$$

i.e., the hill is about 180 feet above the general level of the ground.

We can now sketch out the full depth of the scene as in Fig. 3 and pick several objects to build up the middle distances. I have chosen the wood a thousand feet away and two trees, one at 400 feet and the other at 300 feet from the camera.

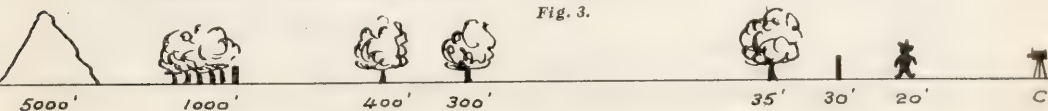
Ground levels at these points are found from the first formula, and the wood, far tree and nearer tree levels are at 0.4, 1.0 and 1.3 squares, respectively, below the middle of the picture. Similarly, if all the trees are assumed to be 28' high, or 24' above camera axis, the levels of the tops come out at 2.4, 6.0 and 8.0 squares, respectively, above the horizon line. This enables us to sketch them in correctly.

To keep all these figures in mind, I have summarised the information overleaf.

Up to this point, we do not seem to have got very far with the construction of the model. However, we have sketched out our scene, established its "depth" and positioned all the principal objects in space. All this is a necessary preliminary to the construction of the model set from the designer's sketch. The next step is to dissect the various planes, adjust the scales to suit the "compression" we intend to apply, then work out the relative movements we shall have to apply to get the true perspective effects which give the impression of solidity and reality which we are seeking on the screen.

Although the next issue is three months ahead, please keep this copy to hand because I shall want to refer to the sketches again next time.

Fig. 3.



FILMING INVISIBILITY (Cont'd from 151)

the invisible. Consider the "March of Time" series, but ignore any particular issue. These virile reels are composed of countless brief scenes, both especially shot and from library sources, welded together to form a rapid and concise survey of a particular aspect of world affairs. Now listen to the commentary. It adds to those visuals something they could never possess. It makes of them a unity. It states a case which the scenes are broadly illustrating. Sometimes shots synchronise with spoken words—direct description—but at others the commentary is talking *against* the visuals as distinct from talking *with* them. You might find examples in this, or similar series, in which a group of the visuals are comparatively meaningless until accompanied by the commentary. This does not mean there should be no relation between what is seen and what is said. Often there should be the closest relationship, but the most imaginative approach is of the kind which achieves two

ends simultaneously—the presenting of the visible and the invisible aspects of life, and merging one into the other. Use your captions to supplement your visuals—to add something to them, instead of employing them merely to explain the obvious. If you saw "San Demetrio, London"—the story of the oil-tanker that completed its long voyage after being crippled in mid-ocean, you will remember that whilst it was, *visually*, a fine and thrilling picture, it was something far more than that, because over and above the actual scenes, the invisible factor was being featured. It was the star of the film.

And so with your home town production. Naturally you will show it as it is, but by also including how it was, and how it is going to be, and by paying full tribute to the human endeavour which has built it up and which is going to continue to preserve the best in it, you will be adding a page to history, for you will be making a *fundamental* film instead of concocting yet another page of superficial scenery to keep alight the bonfire which reduces our memories to ashes.

MULTIPLANE MODEL SETS (Continued from page 163)

Object	Distance from camera (feet)	Height above ground level (feet)	Height above camera axis (feet)	Image height above horizon (inches)	Image at ground below horizon (inches)
Puppet	20	5.5	1.5	.075	.2†
Fence	30	3.5	—0.5	.017	.133
Tree ₁ (br.) ..	35	6.0	2.0	.057	.114
Tree ₂	300	28.0	24.0	.080	.013
Tree ₃	400	28.0	24.0	.060	.010
Wall	1000	4.0	Nil	.Nil††	.004
Wood	1000	28.0	24.0	.024	.004
Hill	5000	180.0	176.0	.035	.000††

Camera set up on tripod with lens axis 4 feet above ground level and lens of 1 inch focal length in use.

† i.e., out of frame. †† i.e., on horizon line.

THE CHRISTMAS SHOW

(Continued from page 159)

usually* requires an additional operator. Incidentally there is no better way of roping in new converts to substandard cine, than to consign a likely helper from amongst the uninitiated.

There is one other way of adding finish to a show which might be called "combined operations." That is to arrange with another enthusiast in your locality to hold your

shows on different days, say Christmas Day and Boxing Day, and pool your projectors. By this means you will both be able to give continuous shows in the manner of the professional cinema. This never fails to please audiences who have grown to think of amateur shows as a series of interruptions with short spells of projection between times.

So do not look at your material and say sadly "c'est la guerre." You can make it your best show yet. And next Christmas—well, that may be another story!

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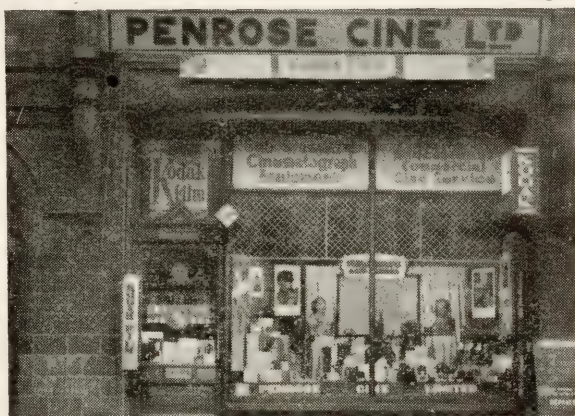
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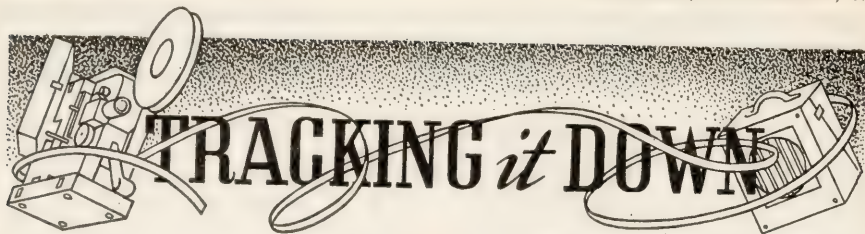
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Secretary's Report

OF recent news interesting to amateur sound film enthusiasts, probably the most important is that the Society of Motion Picture Engineers has turned its attention to the standardisation of 16mm. sound. The subject covers a much wider field than one might at first believe. Several committees are in action, and already many decisions have been made as to recommended practice. Typical items include: "Separation of well-known defects into tolerable and intolerable classification," proposals for "a standard 16mm. trailer on which measurements may be made both for sound and picture uniformity," also standardisation of each link in the sound chain, recommended specifications for projector design, and a number of other points less directly of concern to the amateur.

The need for this consideration is well expressed by a professional operator's comment:—"You take any film and run it through three or four different substandard projectors, and every one sounds different—the film should sound the same on all." While we may console ourselves by arguing that this is only one way of saying that some outfits give better quality than others, "betterness" is a distressingly vague attribute. There are many ways in which sound reproduction may vary, yet without any significant variation in the overall "goodness." It is indeed a relief to know that there are at last to be standards for substandard. Agreed that in matters of quality a standard inevitably means something less than the best obtainable, but carefully regulated dimensions and quantities are essential as a basis for real progress.

A considerable advance in substandard possibilities in other directions is reflected in a statement made by an official of a large processing laboratory. He is prepared to supply—immediately, and in commercial quantities—16mm. film with a track registering frequencies up to 15,000 cycles/sec. This, as most readers will realise, rather

more than doubles the range hitherto considered practicable. Furthermore, this high-fidelity film would cost little, if any, more than the type in current production. If this announcement applies, as the context suggests, to normal release copies, then most of our projectors will require a good deal of "sharpening-up" if they are to do justice to post-war films.

Not that we should expect—for a number of quite valid reasons—that library films will reproduce the very highest registers; but if 15,000 cycles can be effectively recorded and reproduced, then we may hope that 9,000 to 10,000 cycles should be really well defined. Realisation of this would put substandard sound on a footing more nearly approaching that of the best present-day 35mm., or high-quality radio reproduction. Frequency response is, of course, only one aspect of "high fidelity," but to some extent it can be claimed that a margin of reserve in the upper register can be translated into an increased contrast or volume range, which is the other important factor.

Again, this widening of the range should be an immensely important asset in the development of 8mm. sound—discussed in our last issue. (And illustrates once more the inadvisability of trying to assess future developments on the basis of present resources.)

The business of this meeting consists of a conversion report (from a contributor who prefers to remain anonymous), two practical and constructional items, and a question dealt with in recent correspondence. The description of fitting a "non-sync" turntable and change-over switch to the "Vox" is contributed by a reader—Mr. M. E. Deakin.

Another Conversion

"You showed pictures of three amateur conversions in your last issue, and as I found them very interesting, I am sending you details and pictures (Figs. 1 and 2) of another specimen. The basis is a Model C Koda-

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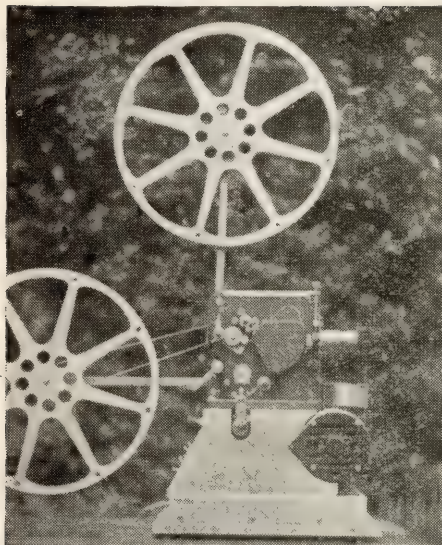


Fig. 1.

A sound conversion based on Kodascope "C".

scope—if 'basis' is the right word! In fact, very little is left of the original mechanism and what there is would be scarcely recognised by the makers. The lamp-house is now large and cylindrical, and provided with its own cooling-fan, so that lamps of up to 750 watts can be used. The condenser system is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter and of relatively long focus so that the lamp-house can be kept well clear of the projector-body for coolness. (The housing of the fan can be seen just above and beyond the main motor). The intermittent has a second claw, below the remaining original one, and the framing device has been replaced by optical framing—the projection lens (interchangeable) now rises and falls with the gate aperture. The old motor now drives the fan, and a new induction type drives the projector by means of a belt to a pulley on the intermittent shaft. The hole for the old motor shaft is now occupied by the bearing for the rotating scanning-drum and a mirror-lens system for throwing the beam to the rear of the projector. The original sprocket-wheel, suitably altered, is still used for film feed, but an additional 12-tooth wheel now provides the drive following the scanner. The spool-arms have been replaced by sturdy square-section tube, the spindles have been re-made with oversize bearings and a twin pulley on the take-up can handle either 400 or 1,600' spools.

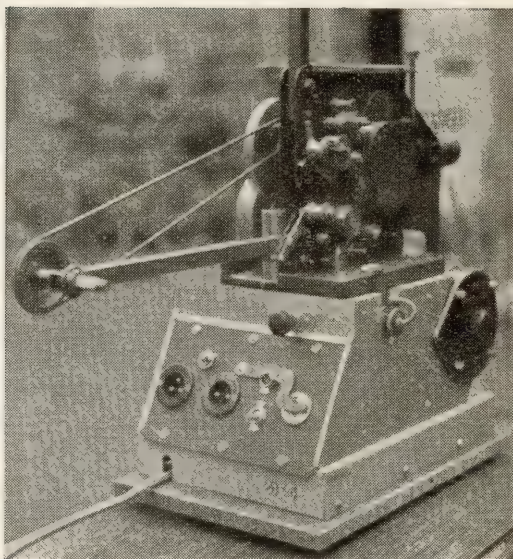


Fig. 2. Showing layout of soundhead and control panel.

"A 6 volt 1 amp exciter is used, and is provided with screw adjustment in two planes—that for alignment can be seen projecting above the control panel. The home-made optical system is fixed through the base of the projector. After leaving the picture-gate the film passes over a rubber-faced impedance-roller, which both guides the film, and holds it in contact with the scanning-drum. From the drum it passes up over the 12-tooth sprocket, with which it is held in engagement by two interlocked jockey rollers—both "stopped" to give about 8 thous. clearance for the film. It then passes down and round a "shock-absorbing" roller mounted on a spring-arm, and thence to the take-up spool. As the outfit had to be usable on AC or DC (with a converter for amplifier and motor in the latter case) two separate circuits were provided: One is 'universal' and supplies lamp and fan motor: the other 'AC only' for the main motor and the rectifier-feed for the exciter. The two inputs can be combined on AC mains, or individually fed through appropriate resistances, etc., on DC supplies. The switches are interlinked so that it is possible to run the fan without the lamp, but not vice versa, and similarly the lamp cannot be switched on before the main motor is running. All items are individually fused. Both motors are rubber-mounted and relatively free-floating, so that

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mechanical noise is small. The cash cost was extraordinarily small—it is a real 'junk-box' job—but the expenditure in man-hours certainly made up for it!"

We reproduce this description in full as it may serve to indicate to the less initiated just what a fantastic amount of work has to go into the conversion of a simple silent projector to an outfit capable of giving a performance comparable with that of a good commercial sound-projector. Our contributor adds a footnote:—"P.S. I don't offer to provide constructional details—I should hate anyone to have to go through all I did!"

Adding "Non-Sync." to the "Vox"

"After I had had my 'Vox' for a few months I thought it would be rather nice if I could emulate the Cinema and introduce incidental music during the changing of the reels. This was in 1943, when turntables and pick-ups were in short supply, but I finally managed to get one of each—and then my real troubles began.

"I immediately found that insertion of the P.U. jack cut out the S.O.F., but putting a switch in the P.U. leads soon overcame this particular difficulty. My next trouble was a terrific hum, along with various squeaks and screeches—the latter being due mostly to hand capacity effects. As these seemed to arise mostly between the switch and projector, I wired this up with 3-core screened cable, which improved matters considerably. I still found, however, that when the switch was touched it caused hum. I unearthed from the junk-box an old gramophone motor

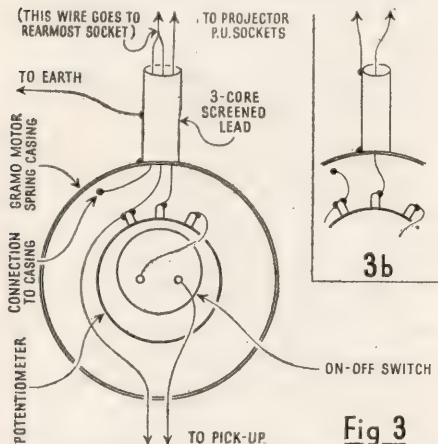
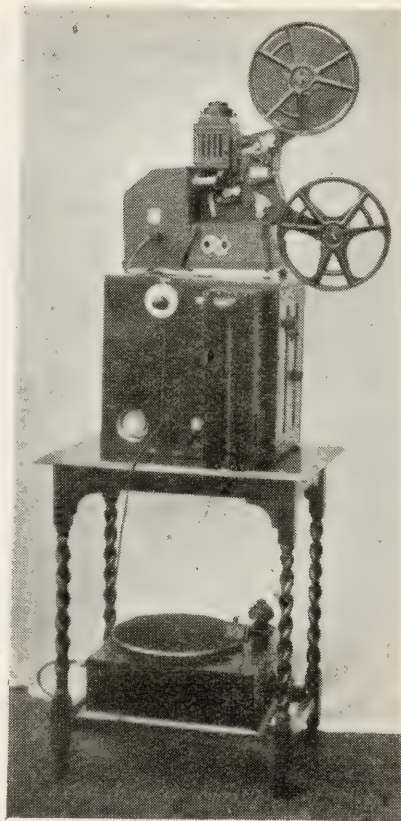


Fig. 3. Circuit for connecting volume-control and switch to the "Vox". (3b. Suggested simplification.)

Fig. 4. Mr. Deakin's arrangement of "Vox" with non-sync. turntable and dimmers.

spring casing and drilled it to take a potentiometer with on-off switch. The screening of the lead and the switch casing were connected to earth, but the hum still persisted, and I finally found, after many failures, that by connecting a wire (Fig. 3a) to the P.U. connection nearer the back of the projector and taking this straight to earth, that the hum disappeared.

"The cabinet shown in the accompanying photograph (Fig. 4) was made originally to stand the projector at the right height, but having been successful with the change-over switch, I decided to try my hand at some dimmers. I tried without success to buy resistance wire, but finally managed to obtain some old resistances from an electrician. These were on formers about half an inch in diameter and had to be unwound. I followed the instructions given in A.C.W. ('Do It Yourself,' July 1941) and eventually



produced three good dimmers, which I fixed in the cabinet together with the transformer. But I found that I was getting hum again, so decided to line the whole of the cabinet with sheet tin, and do all the wiring in screened lead. This cured the hum. Two of the dimmers work on the screen alternately (one giving red and green and the other amber and purple) or occasionally together, and the remaining dimmer operates the house lights."

While this description will be of value to many other users of the Vox, we believe that at least part of the difficulty in eliminating hum could have been avoided by the use of screened cable between the control-box and the pick-up. Also a single-core screened cable should serve between control box and projector, as suggested in the alternative diagram (3b). Under these circumstances, a direct connection to earth would seem unnecessary, but having had some trouble with "liveliness" of the nominal "earth" P.U. socket on the Vox, we would not be too dogmatic on this point.

Mechanical Silence

"The more one improves any part of a sound projector the more obvious do the deficiencies of the other parts become." This observation, made in T.I.D. one year ago, has been many times confirmed since then. The quest for mechanical silence is no exception. Our enthusiastic experimenter has replaced the humming brush-type motor with a quiet induction type. The howling high-speed cooling fan has given way to a

slower-revving one of larger diameter. He has carefully lined the inside of the "blimp" with felt, to increase its sound-absorbing properties. His projector now runs beautifully quietly, and is scarcely audible six feet away. He is all set to give a really professional performance, with no distracting mechanical background, despite the lack of a projection box. Everything starts off well, the quiet passages in the film really are quiet. But gradually a small noise becomes more and more insistent: from being a very faint and occasional sound, it becomes louder and more frequent. It can arise from any slackness of the feed-spool on its spindle, and increases as the rotations speed up. It reaches its worst peaks with 16mm. spools made with a square hole at both sides (an abominable practice undoubtedly devised by someone more interested in manufacturing economy than in good engineering!). With a brand new spool of this type all may be well—comparatively. But with a worn spool, instead of a steady rotation, the reel moves in a series of lurches, each corresponding with one angle of the hole reaching the top of the spindle. The rubbing gradually wears the spindle and enlarges the hole. (Steel spools may stand up better than aluminium, but do correspondingly more harm to the spindle of the projector). How can we counter this nuisance? There are several possible methods, depending upon the design of the spindle and upon the resources of the individual. If a screw-cutting lathe is available, it will make the task much easier, but an entirely satisfactory job can be made with simple hand tools, as will be seen.

If $\frac{1}{4}$ " or more of the spindle protrudes through the spool, the most obvious method is to cut a screw thread on this, and fit a removable nut to it. The nut must, of course, be taken off each time a spool is changed, but the few seconds which this adds to the process are well repaid by the results. The thread can best be cut on a lathe, but with care can be made sufficiently accurately by means of a die. Suitable

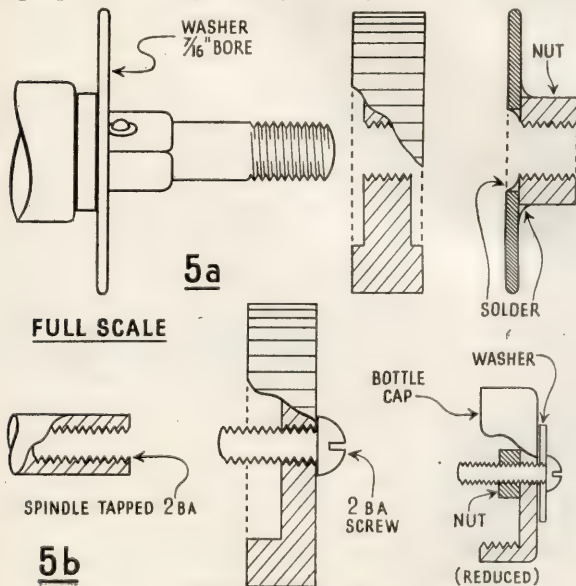
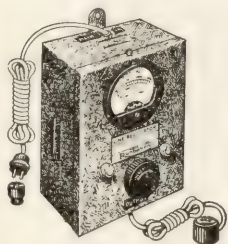


Fig. 5a. Spool-silencing device. Nut turned from solid or built-up.

Fig. 5b. Alternative method. Spindle tapped internally.

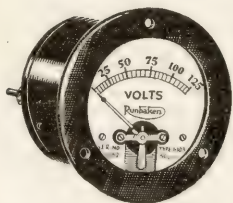
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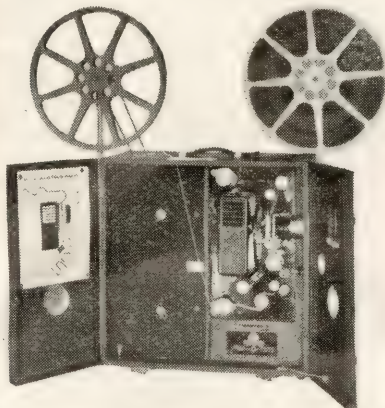
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threads are $5/16" \times 22$ (BSF) or $5/16" \times 26$ (Gas)—the die could probably be borrowed for the occasion from a garage or plumber. The nut must be of relatively large diameter, as the standard type would put an undue strain on the spool, and it can either be turned up in the lathe, or built up from a normal nut plus a large washer. As indicated in Fig. 5a, the nut should be at least $1"$ in diameter, and a very suitable type of washer is one made for use on car mudguards—with a central-hole $7/16"$ in diameter, about $2"$ overall and nicely bevelled. The turned type of nut is easier to handle, and should be made circular with a knurled periphery.

On other machines a possible alternative is to fit a large headed screw into a hole tapped in the spindle (Fig. 5b). Naturally it is very desirable to have this hole accurately placed, and often some existing locking device—rendered superfluous by the new fitting—will, when removed, leave a hole to act as guide. A suitable thread in this case is 2 BA (or $3/16"$ BSF) and the screw, which will have to be "mushroom" shape can either be turned from solid or built up from a nut and bolt plus some suitably shaped oddment such as a bakelite bottle-cap.

To complete the process, a large thin washer should be fitted to the inner end of the spindle, to distribute the pressure on the rear of the spool. Its diameter should be similar to that of the outer nut or screw. Normally, the thickness of this (about $1/16"$) will not throw out the alignment sufficiently to require any readjustment of the spool arms.

Designing an Amplifier

Q. "In a recent discussion, you quoted 5 microamperes as a typical current for the photocell. Is this figure true of most projectors, and can I set about designing my amplifier on this basis?"

A. Although typical cell-currents are in the order of 5 micro-amperes, this figure by no means applies to even the majority of outfits. It is probably much greater than found with most substandard scanning systems, except those with very high-powered exciters. That is, where the projection lamp is used for excitation, the current may equal or surpass this figure, while at the other end of the scale one may be lucky, with some low-powered and inefficient scanning systems, to get a cell current of one-fifth of a micro-ampere. In round figures, the highest output may be fifty times that of the lowest—a difference equivalent to one high-gain stage of amplification,

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Apart from these wide differences which may be encountered, there are so many other factors that it is almost impossible for the amateur to design his amplifier solely on the basis of cell output. A perfect sound-track may modulate the current by about two-thirds of its full value, but the average track will be much less effective—say one-third modulation—and one will often meet films on which a combination of an under-printed track and a lot of hard wear reduce the maximum modulation to something nearer 10 per cent. In other terms, the signal strength may vary between the extremes of about 2 volts, R.M.S. and one two-hundredth of a volt. The higher figure is roughly the same as that given by a sensitive gramophone pick-up.

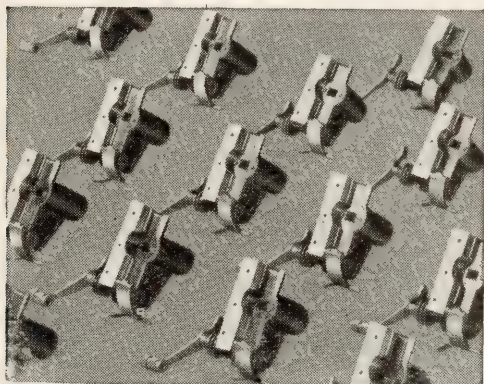
Under average circumstances it is easier to rely upon the more rule-of-thumb basis of two stages of high-gain amplification before the output stage (which last includes any driver or phase-splitting stage). "High gain" is provided typically by valves of the H.F. Pentode type, in resistance capacity coupling. (Complete circuits were given in T.I.D. in the Dec. '42 issue). This should provide ample reserve and will allow the experimenter to make use of an effective tone-control system, and, what is even more important, to use a really fine scanning beam. Tone control may reduce the gain of the amplifier by about one-half, while reducing the width of the scanning-beam in the region of "normal" setting, produces a very marked drop in volume. Tone control and slit-fineness are, of course interdependent. If the scanning is really efficient very little, if any, "top lift" need be provided in the amplifier. If the scanning is a little too coarse, satisfactory balance can be obtained by cutting bass and boosting the treble. But if the scanning beam is, say, twice the correct height, then no amount of tone control can give a balanced quality.

From this extremely brief consideration of some of the relevant factors, it should be obvious that in the end trial and error alone can provide the basis for successful amplifier design.

T.I.D. Notes

Available on free loan are various treatises by members of the T.I.D. Board on the following subjects : "Effective Presentation," "Sound Tracks and their Faults," "Elements of S.O.F. Recording," "Intermittent" (Constructional), "Dual-gauge Soundhead" (Constructional), also a most interesting semi-autobiographical account by P. Lord, "Projectionist." Any of these may be borrowed by sending 4d. in stamps. Applications are taken in strict rotation.

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Conversion Booklets

WE have received for review two booklets from Messrs. Cineluxe, Ltd., on the subject of sound conversions. "Converting the Kodascope 'C' to Sound" (12 pages 3/6), is an account of a conversion carried out by Mr. Jas. A. McKean, with a full complement of line-drawings and diagrams. Helpful information is given about such matters as electrical alterations, motor connections and mains switching, and a circuit diagram is provided of a suitable amplifier. The sound-head is of the fixed-drum type, the original sprocket-wheel being used to draw the film through the head. This has been achieved with some ingenuity, but involves the film having to take a hairpin bend around a roller of about $\frac{1}{2}$ diameter, which would seem likely to be a rather severe test for splices. Alterations are described to provide for 800' spools, and for a constant-speed-motor drive, with very little disturbance to existing arrangements. The conversion has the appearance of being substantially proportioned and cleanly laid out, and the whole work suggests that the author is quite at home with engineering of this type. Two points which we would question are the wisdom of suggesting



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a velvet friction-pad, bearing on the emulsion side of the film, and whether .001" is really a fine enough scan to give satisfactory top response. There are one or two minor errors and misunderstandings in the text, but in the main the subject is clearly expressed.

The second—"Practical Sound Conversion for Amateurs" (30 pages, 5/6) is the fifth reprint (revised) of the work which first appeared in 1941, and which we then reviewed. It shows little change from the original, and indeed it is rather surprising that the author has not seen fit to amend several items. For instance, the statement that an error of five to six frames in synchronisation is not readily noticeable. One quarter of a second is surely more than enough to confuse the audience when lip-movement is visible. The diagram of the base connections of British-type photocells is somewhat misleading, as the cathode is much more often connected to a "filament" pin than to the "grid" pin, as shown. More serious are some of the mechanical suggestions. That jockey rollers should be altered to exert greater pressure on the film at the sprocket-wheels, in order to increase frictional damping is, to put it mildly, to ask for very rapid film wear. The recognised practice is, of course, to keep all pressure off the film at such points, the rollers being carefully adjusted to maintain a clearance of rather more than film thickness between them and the sprocket-wheel. Again, Fig. 10, a suggested 16mm. layout, is so patently impracticable that one wonders why it was ever allowed to reach the printed page. Elsewhere the implied assurance that a single claw is satisfactory for 16mm. operation will be very keenly questioned by most experimenters, as would the suggestion of using mecano-type chain to drive a sound-head. As an introduction to sound experimentation, the booklet contains much useful material, but as an approach to conversion it is presented in such a way that the unwary newcomer could hardly be blamed for assuming a perilous over-confidence of easy and inexpensive success.

C.L.T.

The Student's Bookshelf

The British Film Institute (4, Great Russell Street, London, W.1.) has published, at 6d., a useful list of books for students of the cinema available in the Institute's library. They are classified under subject headings (biography, criticism, education, history, technique—amateur and professional, etc.), but although the date of publication is given, the value of the list would have been enhanced had brief synopses been provided and some indication given of the relative merits of some, at any rate, of the books, for the unsuspecting student may not be aware that a few of the books in this list are woefully dated and inaccurate in many particulars.

The Institute has also published, as a special supplement to its quarterly, "Sight & Sound," an excellent 20-page pamphlet: "An Index to the Creative Work of David Wark Griffith" (Part 1: The Birth of an Art, 1908-1915). Griffith's interest for the amateur lies not alone in the fact that he was a pioneer of film technique but that he, too, like the amateur, did most things for himself.

As pointed out by the compiler of the Index, Seymour Stern, "the credits on a D. W. Griffith film are not important, for the reason that his productions are all one-man jobs. Griffith was the original writer - producer - director - editor-exhibitor." From 1908 until 1930, the beginning of the sound-film era he "was, in the most exact and literal sense, the director of photography and of editing on all the films which he directed, as well as on many which he merely supervised or produced."

This list of films of his 'primitive' period, leading up to "The Birth of a Nation," is extremely well documented, those films marking the first use of certain aspects of now standard technique being specially noted. Thus, it is pointed out that the flash-back was first used in motion pictures

in "The Adventures of Dollie" (1908); the first dramatic use of the close-up appeared in "After Many Years" (1908); "The Politician's Love Story" (1909) had the first use of back-lighting: "a shot into the sun, so that the sun shines through the ice and snow-filled trees, outlined with light, the shadows falling towards the camera."

Other notable signposts in the history of film were: "The Lonely Villa" (1909); parallel action montage used in climax, probably for the first time on the screen; "Ramona" (1910): first long shot ever taken; "The Massacre" (1912-14): first known use of the moving camera; while in "The Avenging Conscience" (1914), based on Poe's two stories, "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Pit and the Pendulum" and on his poem, "The Raven," Griffith anticipated by ten years the German psychological film.

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SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

(Continued from page 180)

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Wanted 1000 watt auto transformer 230/110 volts. Bell & Howell exciter lamps and projector lamps. Thompson, 82, Walsall Road, Aldridge, Staffs.

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As from the next issue dated March/May the rate per word for all classified announcements will be 6d. per word (minimum 6/-). Box Nos. 1/- extra.

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Rates : 6d. per word (minimum 6/-). Box number 1/- extra. All advertisements must be prepaid. The latest date for receiving small advertisements for the March issue is February 4th. Replies to Box numbers to be addressed c/o "Amateur Cine World", 24, Store St., London, W.C.1.

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(Continued on page 179)

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